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MY TOWN-GARDEN.

THERE is nobody so base, but as the spring comes round, is pleased to see the green leaves and the flowers. The omnibus cad, and the gentleman of St James's Street, wears each a flower in his button-hole, though in the one case it may be but the vulgar stock, and in the other the delicate picotee. Even the horsey man, who, one might think, would prefer the smell of the stable above everything, exchanges, as the summer grows, the straw he carries, retriever-like, between his teeth, for a bud or a blossom. The windows of the great squares are aglow with petal and calyx, and gladden the passer-by at eve and morn with gracious odours; and even in the humblest streets, you may see flowers in every story, set in broken mugs or tea-cups, but emitting a pleasant perfume—which is their worship, for all we know—as they look up at the sky. The sky is tolerably blue in summer, even in town, and to many it is their only garden. A great writer, who has of late lost public favour by expatiating upon other subjects than those upon which he is so well qualified to speak, and which surely should be enough for the ambition of any man—namely, Art and Nature—in dwelling upon the beauties of the sky, takes it upon himself to say that these are neglected and thought nothing of by common people. I think he is mistaken there. I am not an uncommon person myself, and yet I have spent hours (and often cricked my neck) with staring up at the glorious vault of Heaven, since there was not so much as a blade of grass to attract my gaze to earth; and if I may judge from what I have seen of the direction of people's eyes who sit at their open windows in the evening, in the less wealthy neighbourhoods in town, the habit is shared by many others.

There is no city in the world provided with such glorious breathing-places as London; and not only have new parks been consecrated to the public enjoyment, but of late years the old ones have been wonderfully improved. Hyde Park is now fringed by flower-gardens of its own, and fountains are springing up, and avenues

growing everywhere, under the hand of some fairy-minister. But all this beauty only makes the heart more sad when it is at last shut out; when the gates are closed at sundown, and all the evening incense of the trees and flowers is wasted on the park-keepers (of whom I should like to be a private friend), and the poor return to the narrow dusty streets and evil smells. How they long to sit a while, and linger in the open air, you may learn in any suburb—such as Kilburn—where, beside every ditch, they knock up a little Robinson Crusoe arbour out of half-a-dozen planks, and take their tea and water-cresses therein with as much gratification as though it were a bower of roses by Bendemeer's stream. I have heard it suggested that these persons are for the most part country-bred folks, compelled, contrary to their wish, to reside in town; but I do not think that their conduct requires any such explanation. I was born within the sound of Bow Bells myself, and yet I am sure nobody has pined for a bit of garden more than I have, for the last thirty years. As I did not begin to pine when I was an infant, it may be conjectured that I am not young. I must acknowledge, in fact, although still a spinster, that I have seen, as the novelists express it, 'somewhat more than forty summers,' and seen them too, unfortunately, in the midst of brick and mortar. A fortnight in the green fields, or by the side of the sparkling sea, had been the extent of my holiday, up to this present year of grace 1865, when my circumstances improved so greatly that I might have taken a couple of months, had I chosen to do so. Instead of this, however, I took a house with a back-garden. I judged it better to have a slice of the country ever with me, than to take a lease of it, always terminating before I wanted to leave it; and nobody can tell the pride with which I contemplated that bit of ground enclosed by its three bare walls, of which it was my intention to make an Eden.

Not, however, that I contemplated anything so magnificent as fruit-trees. Parterres of different coloured flowers, fringed with box, intersected by little gravel-walks, was the extent of my ambition,

although, perhaps, I was secretly visited by an ambitious dream of a fountain in the centre, and a summer-house at the further end. The gravel-walks were easily managed, but not so the parterres. Upon this important subject I consulted a number of persons, not perhaps exactly skilled in flower-gardening, but who all had tastes of their own, and differed widely from one another. In the end, I put myself in the hands of my greengrocer—as one whose profession was in some sort allied with the matter in hand—who recommended ‘a party,’ in whom, he said, I might trust for supplying me with the proper seeds. The appearance, or, at least, the apparel of this individual, was eminently satisfactory, and suggestive of his calling. He was clothed almost entirely in blue calico, and wore an apron in which there were something like six-and-twenty distinct pockets, or rather pouches, such as are (erroneously) supposed to be peculiar to the kangaroo. He was also provided with a gigantic pair of gardening-scissors, with snips and snaps of which he emphasised his conversation in an alarming manner; in short, there could be no doubt of his being what he described himself to be—a practical gardener. Nay, he was theoretical also, for the way in which he laid down the law respecting the rotation of flower-crops, and the times and seasons for planting and potting, as well as the whole system of melon-raising (a branch of horticulture to which my aspirations did not reach), would have edified Mrs London herself, or the editor of the *Gardeners' Chronicle*.

For the small remuneration of twenty-five shillings, he brought me thrice as many little brown-paper parcels, as carefully separated as was Robinson Crusoe's gunpowder against thunder-storms, and informed me that they contained the germs of many rare and varied plants. He would ‘guarantee,’ he said, as the colours would mix well. His frequent use of that word ‘guarantee’ impressed me with a confidence in this man approaching to awe. And when he had spent a whole day in my garden upon his knees, employed in dibbling in the seeds, I thought a sovereign a very modest demand for so much skilled labour. I do not say that he left my barren plot a glowing flower-garden, but he stuck it all over with small cleft sticks, with bits of white paper in them, than which—except actual blossoms—nothing could be more perfectly satisfactory. The parterres looked like wholesale Infant Burial Grounds. The only thing, in fact, that disturbed me now in my great expectations was, that when my garden should be gay as a rainbow with all these risen beauties, the walls would look rather bare. The casket, to speak poetically, would scarcely be appropriate for the jewels. But here, again, my greengrocer came to the rescue: I myself, in my ignorance, had thought of paint, but he spared me the humiliation of proposing this by immediately suggesting Ivy.

‘Ivy,’ cried I, ‘is the very thing. Let the same person you previously so highly recommended, and who has already planted’—

‘Well, no, ma'am,’ interrupted the greengrocer confidentially: ‘that party has failed to come up to my expectations with regard to a certain floral transaction with another customer of mine: but I will send you another party, for whom I would answer as I would for my own brother.’

Whereupon, within the next few days, arrived a melancholy person in rusty black—whose practice, one would have thought, lay with cypress rather

than ivy—very red about the eyes and the nose, as also doubtless about the knees likewise, upon which joints, according to his own account, he passed most of his earthly pilgrimage. ‘Ivy! yes, he should rather think he did understand plantin’ o’ ivy. It was an art which he might say he had been born into, and in the practice of which he would give in to ne’er a man in England. Give him a trowel and a bit o’ mattin’ to kneel upon, and he’d go right round that ‘ere garden in a single day.’

This did not convey that idea of extreme speed to my mind which he evidently wished it to do. I should have thought that half a day, considering the limited area of his operations, would have been amply sufficient for them.

‘But consider the extent of wall, ma'am,’ argued he; and since I did not understand the nature of ivy-planting, but conjectured that it might possibly have to be nailed on to the wall at once—like that description of fruit-tree which is called *Lawk-a-daisy*—I said no more. The peculiarity of ivy-planters is, it seems, that they cannot begin work without some pleasant stimulant, such as a glass of gin; and when half their task is over, they will come to the kitchen-window, and pointing to their knees, explain that they hardly feel equal to going on with it unless they get another. While actively engaged in their duties before a perfectly blank wall, they suggest the idea of idolaters of brick and mortar; and when they have finished their circuit—always upon their knees—the whole included space seems to have been in a manner consecrated. So at least it struck myself, the proprietress of the favoured domain in the present instance; and long after the man had departed, the impressions of his knees all round the garden had a mysterious fascination for me. What had he done, this singular being, beside dig a little hole at intervals and cover it up again? Time only could shew.

Months went on, and not only did that wall remain as blank as ever, but the parterres maintained their character of infant Necropolises. Everything (I read in the newspapers) was coming up with unprecedented rapidity everywhere else; but excepting some mustard and cress which I had sown with my own hand in a mignonette box, not a sprout of green appeared above the surface of that ground which I so proudly called my own. The only flower which it gave any signs of producing was the Laughing Stock—and that it was fast becoming to all my neighbours. At last, I called in person upon the greengrocer; and upon his kindly ‘stepping over,’ and prodding about my garden with a little rake, he came to the sad conclusion, that neither of the highly-recommended ‘parties’ had planted a single seed. ‘You should always see ‘em dibble ‘em in, ma'am, with your own eyes: there is no trusting persons in the gardening line any further than you can keep your eyes on ‘em.’ Sound advice, doubtless, but which certainly arrived a little late. I quietly declined any other recommendations from the same source, and determined to look about for myself for a professor of floriculture. I confess I was vastly annoyed. The time for planting had gone by, and for those first three months of summer I might just as well have let my bit of garden, to whose glowing colours I had looked forward with such pride, as a drying-yard or a cricket-ground. There were the box and the gravel, to be sure, but both these, I am given to understand,

flourish with equal luxuriance in the depths of winter.

At this period of my discontent, there arrived one morning a certain white-awned flower-cart, an unusual visitant in my new neighbourhood, which is supposed to be independent of any such artificial supplies. When I saw it, my heart sank within me at the thought of all that might have been in my own garden but for the perfidy of Man. Had the person in charge of these floral treasures been anything like the two preceding wretches; had he shewn any affectation of external pockets and plant-scissors, or the least trace of melancholy and overwork about the knees, I should have discredited him altogether, and suspected that his blossoms had no roots, and that his leaves were stuck on with wire. But he looked so entirely unlike a gardener, that I felt a sort of confidence in him at once. He wore, although it was a dreadfully hot day, an immense fur cap and a suit of corduroys; and it was evidently with reluctance—as being a statement in which he had no professional interest—that he removed his pipe to inform the public that his plants were ‘all a-growing and a-blowing.’ Moreover, he was not covetous after money. I asked him the price of a few common specimens, and all he said was: ‘Well, mum, if you happen to have an old greatcoat as you don’t know what to do with, or a pair of’—

‘What, sir?’ cried I, in considerable alarm.

‘Boots, mum, boots,’ continued he, without betraying the slightest embarrassment. ‘Or if your ‘usband chance to have any weskits’—

‘My good man,’ said I quietly—for there was nothing to be angry about in the poor fellow’s mistake—I am unmarried.’

‘Then the more’s the pity and the shame,’ responded this individual. ‘But I desay now you’ve a brother or somebody in the house who has got an old ‘at or a portmanteau.’

‘No,’ said I; ‘there is no gentleman whatever upon the premises; and I may as well tell you at once that I have very little money to spend upon flowers; only, if you have any good seeds to sell, and will tell me how to plant them myself, I will buy some of you. Only, they must be of a sort to come up at once; for I have lost so much of the summer already.’

‘Quick returns and small profits, eh, mum? Well, that’s my maxim likewise. I’ve got a good parcel of seeds here—but they’re all o’ one sort’—

‘I don’t care about that,’ said I hastily, ‘so long as I get flowers of some kind. I’ve waited too long to be particular.’

‘Well, mum, I’ll guarantee it’—

‘You needn’t do that, my good man,’ exclaimed I apprehensively, ‘and I’d rather you didn’t. Now what is the name of it?’

‘Why, we gardeners calls it the *Dontnoyer Tryagenyer*. It grows up uncommon quick surely; and it have a gold blossom. It’s very easy to plant, for you only need sprinkle it on the ground, unless there be many birds about, which don’t appear to be the case in these parts, excepting canaries and parrots.’

For five shillings I bought quite a little sackful of this seed, and passed the day in sowing the whole garden with my own hands, for I was determined there should be no mistake this time.

After three days of delicious expectation, something green, and a good deal of it, began to peep forth in all the beds. Fortunate thus far, the

nature of the flower became an engrossing subject of speculation with Norah, my Irish waiting-maid, and myself, for none of the botanical books in my possession could give me any information upon this point. With one voice, as Norah observed (who is a person of education), they were silent about the *Dontnoyer Tryagenyer*: but, upon the whole, we were inclined to think it would be a peculiar species of Marigold.

I shall never forget the morning when my faithful waiting-maid entered my apartment with the corner of her apron to her eye, and murmured: ‘Dandelions!’ The greengrocer had that moment called, and identified with those hateful weeds what was coming up so luxuriantly in all the *parterres*. I had not the heart to remove them. My poor Town-garden looked yellow enough for a month or two to give me jaundice; and then the blossom was succeeded by a sort of fluff, which streamed away like a great gauze window-curtain with the first wind: this was rather pretty to look at; but the greengrocer has since informed Norah that it has done an immensity of damage. I can’t understand how this can be, and I hope it is not true: I am sure I have had misfortunes enough with my Town-garden without its injuring other people.

A NIGHT AT CLAMPS-IN-THE-WOOD.

In the present age, when we hear so much about the supernatural, and are informed by a host of witnesses that certain wonderful phenomena can be induced by fulfilling the requisite conditions, it is interesting to examine, when possible, those statements or assertions which seem to indicate that spontaneous mysteries, if we may so term them, occur in various places, or, in other words, that unaccountable facts take place, or are believed by certain persons to take place.

There is, we believe, no subject which requires a more dispassionate or searching inquiry than this so-called Supernatural; and the person making it should be as much like a machine, bodily and mentally, as it is possible to make himself. We all know how often our senses may be deceived, or at least one or two of them, and thus we should hesitate before we express an opinion, when the facts seem to tend to the unusual. We have but to look through a stereoscope, and to there see the really flat surface resolved into foreground and distance, to be aware that, had we not the sense of touch, by means of which we can test that our sight is temporarily deceived, we might conscientiously assert that the photograph at which we were looking was a statuesque production, standing out from the paper, and not a mere representation of light and shade.

The ghostly effect of the plate-glass image, again, proves to us that one sense alone is not always to be trusted, but must be kept in check by others. When, however, we bring our five senses to bear upon a subject, it is difficult for us to say whether or not these have been all deceived, for if we grant the possibility of such an event, we must also allow that some doubt must exist as to our own tangibility or identity, for we have no other means of judging as to the substances and events around us than by the five senses with which we are provided.

In addition, however, to the care necessary to guard against a too complete dependence upon any

one sense, we must, to be competent investigators, be free from that prejudice which too often induces us to form an opinion very hastily from a slight examination of facts; whilst another equally prejudiced person would come to a directly opposite conclusion, though a witness only to those facts which we also had seen. Again, we should avoid examining any evidence when our object is mainly to prove, or to disprove, according as we wish the result to be. Upon the whole, therefore, it may with truth be asserted, that an impartial investigator, especially on subtle phenomena, is very rarely to be found.

Having, then, a due diffidence as regards the infallibility of the senses with which nature had endowed us, but having tested the capacity of these in various parts of the world, and found that they might usually be trusted, we somewhat eagerly listened to the account of a friend who informed us of strange sights and sounds, mysterious nightly visitations, and other wonders, which were said to take place at a ruined farmhouse, part of which was inhabited, situated in one of the wildest glens in Derbyshire, and entitled 'Clamps-in-the-wood.'

It was a dull January day that we were deposited at the village of Ashbourne, in Derbyshire, and the cold fog seemed to penetrate ruthlessly through the thick overcoat with which we were provided. The nearest hotel to the scene of our investigation was distant from Ashbourne about five miles, and a vehicle having been hired, we were in the space of about one hour deposited at the door.

A visitor during the dreary season of January was rare in this locality; the summer, with its bright warm days and trout-fishing, being considered more attractive. One always finds a welcome in an inn, however, and so we were soon at home, sipping a quiet glass of wine by the fire. We had, however, a work to perform, and we were busily engaged in planning how the first sod was to be turned. Strolling down the passage that led to the landlord's parlour, we asked and obtained permission to enter, and then found ourselves in the presence of the landlord and his wife, the village schoolmaster, a butler or responsible servant of the squire's, and another man, whose occupation seemed to be 'promiscuous.' A little awkwardness at first prevailed, until we frankly stated that we did not like smoking in the parlour, so would take our pipe where we were, if there was no objection. In ten minutes we were all at home, and our train was ready to be fired, and our information illuminated. The friend from whom we had heard of 'Clamps' had stayed at the hotel, and seemed deservedly popular. Having heard his praises sounded, we were at length asked how he was. 'Quite well,' we replied, 'but rather curiously engaged, as we believe he is collecting ghost-stories.' Now this, although not strictly correct, had a foundation, and a good one, on truth, and served to answer the purpose we had in view. Two of the company rose to our cast more quickly than would the least cautious trout at a fly in the stream below.

'Ghost-stories! Then he ought to come to Clamps-in-the-wood; he'd have enough of them there.'

'Clamps-in-the-wood!' we replied; 'what is that?'

'You tell the gent,' said the landlord, referring to the butler.

'I'd rather hear the schoolmaster,' was the reply. 'Oh, I don't believe a word about it,' was the response of the pedagogue.

'And I don't know what to say,' said the landlord; 'for I've heard from so many people who have seen it, that I don't know what to think.'

'But what is there to be seen?' was our inquiry.

'You tell, Joe,' was the address to the unknown man; 'you've been there lately.'

'I'd as lieve be excused, and should like to hear Muster [the landlord] tell us, for he knows all about it.'

Thus called upon, the landlord commenced his tale.

'Well, sir, there's an old, half-ruined house about two miles from here, called "Clamps," and living there is an old woman, her daughter, and son-in-law; there's besides two or three young children. The place is very lonely and out of the way—a regular desolate place. For some years, the old woman used to see of a night strange-looking figures come in through the wall, and sink down through the floor; there used to be loud, heavy knocks heard at the same time, and the figures always seemed to be carrying lights. For a time, both the daughter and son-in-law laughed at this statement, though they, too, heard the noises, though they didn't see the figures; but after a bit, both of them saw just what the old woman did, and precious frightened they were, till they found no harm came to them. Then the figures seemed to be making signs, but this none of the three could stand, so they'd shut their eyes. Now, this has been going on a long time, and puzzles people amazingly.'

'But is it only the three residents who see these figures?' we inquired.

'O dear, no, sir; lots of people hereabouts have been there, and some see them—some don't.'

'Do some see them at the same time that others who are present do not?' we asked.

'That I can't say for certain, sir,' was the unsatisfactory response.

'What object can these people have for telling these stories?' we asked.

'None at all, sir; and they'd give anything to be free of these figures and lights.'

'Well, I've heard a good deal about it, but I don't believe a word,' was the assertion of the schoolmaster.

'You've never been there of a night,' said Joe ironically.

'No; nor I ain't going to be made a fool of.'

'Then you speak by guess like, and don't know whether it be true or not.'

On the following morning, we started in search of Clamps; and after a somewhat damp journey, discovered the half-ruined house, situated in a wild out-of-the-way place. Having examined the building from the exterior, we took advantage of a slight shower to knock at the door, and to obtain permission to enter, and rest for a while. The interior of the domicile was anything but inviting. Two rooms on the ground-floor, and a sort of loft above, were the inhabited portions of Clamps. The lower floors being of stone, gave a cold appearance to the rooms, which was not in any way relieved by the furniture, all being of the most primitive description. The live-stock in the house consisted of an old woman, whose appearance was scarcely prepossessing; her daughter; and two or three children.

Having taken a seat on a rough chair, placed

beside the wood-embers that did duty for fire, we remarked to the ancient beldam that the situation was lonely, but pretty, probably, in summer. This remark had the effect of the most apt leading question, and brought forth a regular budget of information.

'Lonely, sir! yes, it be lonely; but I wish sometimes it was lonelier, that I do. You don't know, sir, what we've suffered here for years now. We're marked people, and has to do something, but we don't know what. I've tried to get the clergy to help me, but they don't seem to know what to do, and oftentimes don't believe me. I'd a thought it was my fancy, like, that heard and saw these things, if my daughter and her man hadn't seen them too, and many people besides.'

'But what do you see and hear?' was our inquiry.

'Well, that I don't know. I don't know what to call them; but they are dark figures, carrying lights in their hands, and other things too. They come when it's night, and make signs to me as if they wanted something, and then they goes down in the ground.'

'And do you see them too?' we asked of the robust daughter.

'I do, sir,' was the reply; 'and till I got accustomed to them, I was very frightened; but they don't do us no harm, and so I ain't afraid now.'

'Have you never spoken to them, or tried to make signs to them, to find out what they wanted.'

'That I wouldn't dare do, sir: I've heard it's dangerous, and I might get a hurt if I did so.'

After hearing various details from both women, we inquired whether people who came to see ever had their curiosity rewarded; and upon receiving an answer in the affirmative, we immediately asked permission to come that evening, for the purpose of seeing the dark figures.

Upon ascending the narrow pathway through the wood, we met a countryman, who, touching his cap, gave us at once an opportunity for inquiries. We then ascertained that he was the son-in-law of the ancient dame, and having for a long time ignored the idea of the dark figures and lights, was at length almost frightened to death by finding them enter the room one evening where he was sitting alone. Since that time, he had very often seen them, and had now, like his wife, become used to them.

The surprise of the worthy landlord was great when we informed him that we purposed passing a night at Clamps-in-the-wood. But having taken a good dinner, provided ourselves with a flask, and a small dagger in case of accidents, we started off about dusk on our expedition in search of a ghost.

The fog on the hills was so dense, that we failed to keep the indistinct path that led into the wood, and narrowly escaped climbing over a wall, and dropping on the opposite side, some forty feet; but the house was at length reached, and we there found the two females and the man sitting round the fire. Upon joining the party, we commenced a course of cross-questioning, endeavouring to shake the evidence which had been independently given us in the morning; but without effect. We also found that the visits of the 'lights,' &c., was a great source of annoyance to these people, and they believed their health suffered in consequence. No object was apparent for these statements being made, supposing them to be untrue; and the

consistency of these illiterate and evidently obtuse people in their evidence was particularly marked.

Upon entering the room, we had placed an extra overcoat on a table at some distance from the fire; and whilst conversing with the man, a slight noise attracted our attention to this coat, when instantly, as though snatched, it slipped off the table on to the floor.

'Horse-hair or wire,' immediately occurred to us; so we took up the coat, examined it carefully, and replaced it in its original position, taking care that the whole coat should lie on the table, to avoid slipping. Scarcely had we retaken our seat, before the coat again fell to the ground. The old woman now volunteered the remark that this had something to do with the figures. Again was the coat replaced, when it remained obedient to the usual laws of matter.

As the hour of midnight approached, we desired to be left alone, and after some persuasion, got rid of the old woman and her daughter; of the son, however, we failed to obtain the absence; but as in half an hour he was sound asleep, we were not much disturbed by his presence.

We had drawn a heavy kind of bench on to the stone, into which, we were informed, the figures disappeared, so that if the dark gentlemen with the lights sank therein, they would have actually to touch us. A slight flickering light was given out by the wood-embers from the fire—just enough to reveal the various objects in the room. Two distinct nasal performances were going on in the loft above, whilst our companion also gave evidence that the god of sleep must be obeyed.

Fully an hour passed without sign of aught; still we were watchful, and ready either to see a fact or detect a fraud. Suddenly, the leaf of the table on which our coat was lying moved up at about an angle of thirty degrees, and again descended; we waited for a repetition of this movement, but finding, after a lapse of several minutes, that all was quiet, we lighted a small piece of taper, and examined the said table-leaf, but could detect no means by which the movement had been made.

Again an interval of repose, followed by several dull, muffled sounds, like a drum gently beaten. To state where these noises came from, was impossible: now they seemed in the wall close to us, then outside the house, and at a distance; then, again, they seemed on the floor; then underground. For fully ten minutes these noises were audible, and certainly were puzzling, for though apparently unmeaning, yet they seemed to move here and there, and to alter their characteristics, as though guided by an intelligence.

During the continuation of these noises, our attention was attracted to the solid-looking door, upon which a curious effect was visible. At about five feet from the ground, and close to the door, a dim light appeared, like that exhibited by a moderator lamp turned down to its lowest power; the light, however, was shaded off into darkness *without a cut shade*, the centre of the light being the more intense. For about ten seconds this was visible, when it seemed to die away as though absorbed by the darkness.

Immediately this object disappeared, we walked to the door, scratched a mark with our dagger at the spot on which we had seen the light. The door we found locked on the inside, the key being in the lock: this key we placed in our pocket, and reseatd ourselves on the bench. Slowly passed

the remainder of the night, until the first faint streaks of daylight roused the females, and brought them down stairs, after which we prepared to take our departure. Before leaving, however, we inquired particularly from the old woman as to the nature of the lights she usually saw; and although her description did not tally with that which we have given, yet there was a similarity between the two. She was evidently disappointed that we had not seen more during our nocturnal vigil, but assured us that if we stopped on watch another night, we should surely see the figures as well as the lights, as those who were 'patient' always did see.

Daylight having now arrived, we examined the door on which we had scratched. It was of solid wood; no artfully-cut trap or opening was there, good old English oak being the material. Our next investigation was directed to the table, the leaf of which had swung up and remained stationary for some seconds. There, also, we failed to detect any artificial means by which the movement had been made; and so, registering the observed facts in our memory, we thanked the trio for their night's lodging, and departed. Alas! we were the slaves of time; we were compelled to leave the neighbourhood on the day after our night-watch, and we could not therefore pursue our inquiries further. Since that period, we have not had an opportunity of visiting the neighbourhood, and therefore Clamps-in-the-wood remains to us a mystery. Our own conclusions or opinion on the observed facts would be valueless to the reader; we can merely state that we have recorded events as they occurred; and the steps we took to prevent either delusion or being tricked without detection, were such as we have found to amply detect some of the performances of our most apt conjurors. We have merely given a genuine detail of our experiences at Clamps-in-the-wood, leaving the reader to form his own conclusions therefrom.

VISIBLE VAPOUR.

BEFORE inquiring into the mysteries of *visible vapour*, let us look for a moment at its antithesis—invisible vapour. What is vapour, may be asked, and when is it invisible? True vapour is an elastic, æriform component of the atmosphere, differing from the other constituents of that body inasmuch that although, like them, it is invisible, yet, unlike them, it is reducible to a substance. We all know what steam is; but perhaps few of us, when watching the soft, cloudy masses of vapour issue from a kettle, inquire, where does it go to when it passes out of sight? This is just the answer to the question, what is invisible vapour? Steam, arising from whatever cause, disappears into the air, and, joining the particles of oxygen and nitrogen of which that substance is composed, takes its place among them to work out the great harmony of creation. To make this third part of the atmosphere visible, we must have a change of temperature, for water possesses the peculiar property of indestructibility. Do what you like with water—freeze it into ice, expand it into steam which passes out of our sight—do what you may, it is still in existence, and can be easily made visible and reproduced by lowering the temperature of the air which contains it. This, then, is the cause of visible vapour; and the two chief forms of it, to which we wish to draw attention, are *dew* and *clouds*.

Dew is the vapour of the air condensed by coming into contact with objects colder than itself; and this difference of temperature between the earth and the air is due to radiation from the former. The earth, it is well known, possesses heat of its own—latent heat, as some call it—and it has this property both intrinsically and by absorbing the heat of the sun; but as heat is ever in motion, it is constantly passing off from the earth, and in this way, when the sun has set, and no equivalent supply of heat is received, the bodies on the surface of the earth which give forth their heat rapidly, lose it, and become colder than the surrounding air. This cold is soon imparted to the air, and the vapour it contains coming in contact with something colder than itself, is precipitated or condensed, and assumes the form of dew or visible vapour. The power of the air to retain vapour depends on heat—the greater the heat, the greater the dryness of the atmosphere; and in proportion to the dryness is the quantity of vapour that the air can hold. As soon as the heat is reduced, the repulsive force which sustains the particles is lessened; and as they approach each other, the vaporous atoms unite, and take a visible watery form.

In speaking of a watery form, we must separate the phenomenon of dew from other aqueous manifestations, such as rain, fog, and mist; dew is moisture settling on objects when no cause for damp is apparent, and no rain is falling. But by dew we do not mean only the moisture on leaves and flowers at night; there is an analogy between this and the mist on a window-pane, which in coldest weather takes the fairy forms of frost-work—between the dew or dulness that gathers on a glass of cold water in a summer's day—between the dimness of a mirror when we breathe upon it—between the clammy damp of a house when a thaw sets in: in each of these cases, the object which is covered with dew is colder than the air surrounding it. In the case of the mist-covered window-pane, we can explain the example thus: The interior of a room is kept warm by fires, and vapour is added to the air by the breath of the persons living in it. This warm air, when it meets the window-pane after sunset—for then no heat is coming to that through the outer air—is chilled, and the vapour is condensed, covering the window with mist. The outer air in winter is below freezing-point; so, instead of retaining the form of mist, the condensed vapour is turned into icy crystals, and hoar-frost in all its loveliness is produced. Just in the same way the cold water lowers the tumbler below the temperature of the warm summer air; the mirror is colder than our breath; the thick walls of a house cannot change their temperature so fast as the atmosphere; and all these objects chilling the warmer air, condense the vapour, and forms dew.

It may now be asked, how can it be proved that the object is colder than the air? This question gave rise to many ingenious experiments, and to one of the most perfect instances of inductive reasoning that is recorded in the history of natural philosophy. The first experiment proving the coldness of an object was made by Dufay, who exposed a silver basin containing a glass cup to the atmosphere during a severely cold starlight night. In the morning, the cup was covered with dew, but the silver basin remained almost dry. Changing the position of the articles, Dufay placed a silver

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The different power in substances to throw off heat is turned to very effectual use in the economy of nature, and it must be viewed as an evidence of an all-wise designing mind, that those things which need moisture most are the best radiators of heat, and therefore the best contractors of dew. Leaves, grass, and plants all have their special powers of radiating heat, so as to obtain their adequate supply of dew, and this simple function is of the greatest importance in the just maintenance of vegetable life, and its benefit is such, that, in the words of Chaucer,

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But this property does not belong only to plants; in the instance of different soils, the dew is found to collect more abundantly on light, porous, cultivated lands, than on the hard dry barren rocks which bring forth no produce. This difference may be seen in our gardens any clear starlight night, when the grass will be found covered with moisture, and the walks dry. Chemistry tells us the reason of this difference—that gravel is a bad radiator, and keeps its heat—but chemistry does not explain how all these simple laws of nature have been made to each fulfil the part that best conduces to the happiness and comfort of the created.

Dew is always a sign of fine weather, and is never seen except under a cloudless sky. Wind and cloud are sure preventives of dew, from the simple reason, that the clouds are able to retain some of the solar heat; and as they can give forth warmth, the radiation from the earth is checked, and a warmer temperature preserved. Wind evaporates the moisture as fast as it appears, and if the wind is easterly, there is little dew or cloud to be seen. The contrary is observed with a westerly wind; but an east wind blows over a vast expanse of land, and having lost its vapour, dries up any moisture it may come across, whereas a west wind crossing the Atlantic is full of vapour, and sheds dew on all sides. These remarks, of course, apply chiefly to particular localities, but the influence of an east wind may be seen in spring. Dew is more copiously deposited in spring and autumn than in summer, as there is usually a greater difference in those seasons between the temperatures of day and night; in spring, however, there is a small deposit of dew when east wind prevails; but in autumn, during the soft influences of south and west winds, the earth is covered with moisture. It has also been observed that there is

a greater formation of dew between midnight and sunrise, than between sunset and midnight.

It must be remembered that the texture of a surface has a great deal to do with its power of radiation. Close-grained substances, such as metals, are admirable conductors of heat, but they are bad radiators. The fact of their particles being close together assists their power of propagating heat from one part to another; but coarse, loose textures, such as down, cloth, wool, cotton, &c., give out heat quickly, and as they do not possess the power of receiving it as rapidly, become cold. Thus they are best adapted for clothing, because they do not conduct the heat of the body away from itself, but it remains collected under their substance, while the outer surface is cold. A very slight shade will prevent radiation. This we see in the contrivances of gardeners, who use bass, canvas, or even muslin, to keep off the frost from their plants; and all these materials have sufficiently loose textures to prevent the heat given out by the plant passing off into the outer air. 'I had often,' says Dr Wells, 'in the pride of half-knowledge, smiled at the means frequently employed by gardeners to protect tender plants from the cold, as it appeared to me impossible that a thin mat, or any such flimsy substance, could prevent their attaining the temperature of the atmosphere. But when I had learned that bodies on the surface of the earth become, during a still and serene night, colder than the atmosphere, by radiating their heat to the heavens, I perceived immediately a just reason for the practice which I had before deemed useless.' The accomplishment of the desired end, without any knowledge of scientific principles to have led to it, is highly interesting, and very creditable to the observant faculty of the uneducated. There is a custom among the natives of India which also illustrates the same principle of radiation as the night-coverings of the gardeners. Artificial ice is commonly produced in India by placing water in flat shallow vessels to the influence of the night-air. The pans are placed in an unsheltered spot on straw, which, being a bad conductor, prevents any absorption of heat from the ground; and the porous texture of the earthenware vessels admits of a portion of the latent heat of the water passing off beneath. Of course, the surface is also radiating heat; and as no equivalent is received, the water gradually diminishes in temperature until the freezing-point is reached. The ice thus formed is covered with straw, to prevent any absorption of heat, and is stowed away in caves, where it is kept for use during the hottest seasons.

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the remainder of the night, until the first faint streaks of daylight roused the females, and brought them down stairs, after which we prepared to take our departure. Before leaving, however, we inquired particularly from the old woman as to the nature of the lights she usually saw; and although her description did not tally with that which we have given, yet there was a similarity between the two. *She* was evidently disappointed that we had not seen more during our nocturnal vigil, but assured us that if we stopped on watch another night, we should surely see the figures as well as the lights, as those who were 'patient' always did see.

Daylight having now arrived, we examined the door on which we had scratched. It was of solid wood; no artfully-cut trap or opening was there, good old English oak being the material. Our next investigation was directed to the table, the leaf of which had swung up and remained stationary for some seconds. There, also, we failed to detect any artificial means by which the movement had been made; and so, registering the observed facts in our memory, we thanked the trio for their night's lodging, and departed. Alas! we were the slaves of time; we were compelled to leave the neighbourhood on the day after our night-watch, and we could not therefore pursue our inquiries further. Since that period, we have not had an opportunity of visiting the neighbourhood, and therefore *Clamps-in-the-wood* remains to us a mystery. Our own conclusions or opinion on the observed facts would be valueless to the reader; we can merely state that we have recorded events as they occurred; and the steps we took to prevent either delusion or being tricked without detection, were such as we have found to amply detect some of the performances of our most apt conjurors. We have merely given a genuine detail of our experiences at *Clamps-in-the-wood*, leaving the reader to form his own conclusions therefrom.

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To this land-formed mist or fog there is an addition increasing its density, and making it decidedly a fog instead of a mist. There is a great affinity between smoke and vapour; their particles unite with ease, perhaps from the fact of water and charcoal having a strong attraction for each other. This is the reason that only London, and some few of the great manufacturing towns producing a large quantity of smoke, have those dense impenetrable fogs so long known in the metropolis.

The exact constitution of mist and fog is still unsettled. Some philosophers maintain that it is formed of minute particles or spherules of water; others, that the watery particles become vesicular, and float around us like miniature soap-bubbles. This last theory was supported by M. de Saussure, who affirms that in the dense fogs which prevail among the Alps, he saw vesicles as large as pease float past him, and covered with a coating as thin as it is possible to conceive. But whatever their real constitution, a similar formation, and a similar difficulty attending upon it, is found connected with clouds. We know that these beautiful phenomena are condensed vapour held in the air between higher and lower temperatures, and to our eye they are motionless. We do not mean that the whole cloudy mass does not visibly progress in one direction or another, but merely that the cloud itself has no apparent movement in its constituent parts. When, however, they are examined through a powerful glass, it will be seen that the atoms of which they are composed move with the greatest rapidity, circulating constantly faster than the eye can follow them, and supported, like the vesicles of the fog, by some unknown medium. This is remarkable, because clouds are in a colder stratum of air than steam, and yet they do not fall to the ground, except from extreme excitement in the atmosphere, and great cold in its currents. But if we observe the clouds of steam issuing from a locomotive, they gradually sink from want of buoyancy to the earth. The cause of this fall is known and apparent. Steam is not a gas, and therefore has no expansive force like a gas to keep it buoyant. Neither are the particles of a cloud gas in themselves. How, then, are they supported in the air? And if the vesicles are filled with gas for their support, as some suppose, how is it introduced into their constitution? The retention of solar heat, and the ascent of currents of warm air to buoy them up, are some of the past suggestions to solve these queries; but the truth is, there are no well-established data on which to ground answers to the many speculations this subject calls forth.

Although clouds are too much an everyday phenomenon to attract general notice, science has laid her hand upon them, and divided them into several classes, which have been subdivided into endless combinations and varieties. The first meteorologist who did this was Howard, and the names he gave to the four chief divisions best express their appearance—*Cirrus*, or curl-cloud, from the Latin *cirrus*, a lock or curl of hair; *Cumulus*, a 'mass or pile'; *Stratus*, that which 'lies, or is laid low'; and *Nimbus*, 'clouds which bring a storm.' The first class is best described by its name: they are light, feathery, fleecy morsels of vapour—

Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean.

Cirrus clouds are portents of fine weather, though sometimes accompanied by wind, and are popularly known as 'mares' tails.' The delicacy of these clouds, and their prevalence in the highest regions of the atmosphere, arise from the quantity of vapour in the air being very small, and its condensation taking place in the lofty and colder regions of the air. Quite the reverse of the *cirrus* is the *cumulus*, with its snowy masses and pearly shadows, that rise mountain above mountain, and rival the Alps, as they borrow a rosy light from the setting sun. This is the most glorious form of cloud there is, and, varying in colour, produces inexhaustible changes of effect, from the colourless mass of snow-like purity, to the dark sharply-defined bank of evening, behind which the sun is setting, edging its sombre hues with a golden fringe, and tinting the canopy of cloud above with every possible change of rosy opal light. The *cumulus*, when seen in a morning, is frequently horizontal at the base, and rounded on the upper side. They depend on the degree of heat in the atmosphere, and, collecting soon after sunrise, increase in size until noon, when the heat of the sun begins to affect them, and they slowly diminish, disappearing about sunset. Originating in large masses of vapour, there is often a rainy tendency in them, especially if their outlines are fleecy, and they float fast against the wind. But if their edges are distinct, and clearly marked, such as can be easily portrayed on paper, they foretell fine weather, and often gather with the wind which accompanies them. *Stratus* is the long line of cloud frequently seen across mountains, the base and summit of which appear below and above the cloud. It also collects over low ground, and rising, will often overshadow the sky with its dull gray lines and indistinct edges. Rain does not fall from it, and it may be considered decidedly the night-cloud, as its long streaky bands form in the evening, and pass away gradually in the morning. The 'clouds which bring a storm,' or *nimbus*, appear to be formed from all the others. Being confusedly mixed together, and losing their individual forms, they form a dark inky pall, from which rain is sure to fall.

Clouds are formed at different heights in the atmosphere: those found at the greatest altitude are the *cirrus*; but no trace of this has been discovered, it is said, at a greater height than seven (estimated) miles. This we believe to be above the height at which clouds are formed, as, when Mr Glaisher ascended in his balloon to the enormous and unparalleled height of six miles, he said the region of clouds had long been passed; and at twenty thousand feet, the cold was such that no vapour could exist, and clouds at that height must be masses of snow or frozen particles. From his account, it is probable that from four to five miles is the highest elevation at which clouds may be formed; but, on the other hand, they are found so low, that in the case of *stratus* they often touch the earth. Many observations have been made to prove the average height of clouds; one of the most patient observers was Mr Crosthwaite of Keswick, who was at the trouble of making observations three times a day for five years, only missing as many days in that time as amounted to a week in each year. His observations were made against the side of Skiddaw, on which marks were fixed at different altitudes, and by this means he ascertained that in the five years, clouds were 2098 times above the top of the mountain, which is 1050

yards high; 518 times between 900 and 1000 yards, and 486 times between 500 and 600 yards in height. Masses of cloud have been measured by aeronautic voyagers one mile and a third in vertical depth; but usually they lie in successive layers, varying with the currents in the upper regions of the atmosphere.

In noticing the various circumstances which conduce to the precipitation of vapour into clouds, we must not pause to examine the cause of motion in the air, but receive it as a well-known evident fact, that there is constant motion in the ocean overhead. Be the cause what it may, there are different currents of air, varying in direction, temperature, and force; and it is owing to the constant change of these currents that clouds are formed and continually changing. Were it not for these variations of temperature and direction, there would be no storms, or squalls, or violent winds; no clouds but stratus would appear, and our climate would resemble that of Peru, where, in consequence of the height and position of the Andes, there is only one current of air, and only stratus is seen in the day, which passes off each night into dew, and rain is an exceptional rarity. In the passes of the Cordilleras, the absence of vapour is such that the air is in the state of the greatest dryness, and electricity is developed on the slightest friction. But in our climate there is a constant change and succession of air-currents; and, consequently, clouds are formed by the meeting of two currents of different temperatures, and by many changes of their form and position. Clouds being therefore an evidence of wind and atmospheric commotion, they are watched with much interest by the weather-wise, and it may not be uninteresting to append a few remarks by which a fair idea of the coming weather can be inferred from these forms of visible vapour. It may be a satisfaction to state that the following remarks, bearing the authority of our great weather-observer, the late Admiral Fitzroy, are extracts from his work on the subject, and therefore worthy of attention and reliance.

Weather clear or cloudy, a rosy sky at sunset, presages fine weather; a sickly-looking greenish hue, wind and rain; a dark (or Indian) red, rain; a red sky in the morning, bad weather, or much wind (perhaps rain); a gray sky in the morning, fine weather; a high dawn, wind; a low dawn, fair weather. A 'high dawn' is when the first indications of daylight are seen above a bank of clouds; a 'low dawn' is when the day breaks on or near the horizon, the first streaks of light being very low down.

Soft-looking or delicate clouds foretell fine weather, with moderate light breezes; hard-edged oily-looking clouds, wind; a dark gloomy blue sky, is windy, but a light bright blue sky indicates fine weather. Generally, the *softer* clouds look, the less wind (but perhaps more rain) may be expected; and the harder, more 'greasy,' rolled, tufted, or ragged, the stronger the coming wind will prove. Also, a bright yellow sky at sunset presages wind; a pale yellow, wet; therefore, by the prevalence and kind of red, yellow, or other tints, the coming weather may be told very nearly; indeed, if aided by instruments, almost exactly.

Small inky-looking clouds foretell rain; light scud clouds driving across heavy masses shew wind and rain; but if alone, may indicate wind only. High upper clouds crossing the sun, moon, or stars in a direction different from that of the

lower clouds, or the wind then felt below, foretell a change of wind *toward their direction*.

After fine weather, the first signs in the sky of a coming change are usually light streaks, curls, wisps, or mottled patches of white distant clouds, which increase, and are followed by an overcasting of murky vapour that grows into cloudiness. This appearance, more or less oily or watery, as wind or rain will prevail, is an infallible sign. Usually, the higher and more distant such clouds seem to be, the more gradual, but general, the coming change of weather will prove.

Light delicate quiet tints or colours, with soft undefined forms of cloud, indicate and accompany fine weather; but unusual or gaudy hues, with hard definitely-outlined clouds, foretell rain, and probably strong wind.

Dew is an indication of fine weather; so is fog. Neither of these formations occurs under an overcast sky, or when there is much wind. One sees fog occasionally rolled away, as it were, by wind, but seldom or never *formed* while it is blowing.

THE CLYFFARDS OF CLYFFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'LOST SIR MASSINGBEARD,' &c.

CHAPTER III.—BROTHER AND SISTER.

It was the quietest hour of the twenty-four, as we in our egotism are wont to speak, as though it were not far otherwise with the majority of our fellow-creatures on this orb, and busy mid-day with our own flesh and blood in the Under-world. The high harvest-moon at full was flooding the silent woods with mellow light, and crowning the eternal hills with solemn splendour. Through the iron gates, the avenue stretched fair and wide, and the broad oaks threw each a shadow of itself on the eastern sward, as perfect as though it were a cast mantle. At the end of the long vista rose the mid-most tower of Clyffe Hall; and on both sides, beyond the trees, vast masses of the stately mansion, or at least of its girdling terrace, could be seen, sleeping in the moonbeams like some enchanted pile of fairyland. Around it spread the park, wooded and knowled, the ferny couching-place of many an antlered herd; and behind it, as far as eye could range, rose the dark background of Ribble Forest and Fell. It was a scene to make the lightest-hearted thoughtful, and yet, if viewed aright, to lighten the burden of the most sorrowful. It matters not which sort beholds it, or if neither does. Autumn after autumn, age after age, the innocent Night wears still this precious jewel of the harvest-moon upon her brow; and the soft effulgence overflows the world, and steepes it in heavenly splendour, whether mortals care to mark it or no; as the Urim and Thummim shone the same, whether he who looked upon them perceived the presence of the Lord of Hosts, or only beheld a burnished breastplate.

Alike upon the crowded towns it shines, where the children of honest Labour sleep unconscious of it, and those of Vice flaunt in the streets unheeded of it; as upon the lonely desolate moorlands, where there is none to gaze upon its lavish sheen. Whatever it bathes in its mild radiance, straight grows fair, except the faces of the Wicked. Fat and afraid, irresolute and cruel, Clement Carr sat in the springless gig looking like a vulgar Vitellius. The countenance of Mr William Cator, also, who did not contrive to awaken the lodge-

keeper (although he hung on to the bell as though he were taking part in a bob major) with his first, nor yet his second summons, was harsh and grim as the stone deer-hounds that sat on either side the portal. When the gates were opened at last, he lashed the mare into a gallop, as though she had been the cause of their long detention. Still, even these men, as they emerged from the double line of oaks, standing like sentinels whose officer of the Watch was Time itself, and beheld the various proportions of the castle (for such in truth it was), each significant of its epoch, but harmonised one with the other by the revolving years—even these men, I say, could not restrain a characteristic outburst of admiration. It was not, indeed, the picturesqueness of this edifice, girt by its broad black belt the sleeping moat, and far less any of the historical associations which might have hallowed it from turret to basement to some folks, that claimed their regard, but the more practical consideration of how considerable an income the proprietor of such a domain must needs possess, who could keep it in such due order and repair; for old as Clyffe Hall was, there was not a vestige of ruin about it; the lawns that sloped down to the moat-side were smoothly shorn, and set with banks of flowers; and from the stone terrace above them, faced with fruit-trees, came news of a trim rose-garden, in every odorous breath of the cool autumn air.

'Fine place, Cator!' observed Mr Carr, as they drove over the stone bridge, but thinly clothed with ivy, which only of late years had replaced the less convenient drawbridge. He spoke not only approvingly, but with a certain air of part proprietorship, which did not escape his companion's attention.

'Very true, Mr Clement,' returned he. 'It's been in the family, in one shape or another, more than five hundred years. They say it grew to this, bit by bit, from a single tower—that to the west, I think it was, where the walls are sixteen feet thick, and the windows mere holes with bars to them—wonderfully convenient for our little business, eh, Mr Clement? But these great places don't change hands very readily. You may smile in your mischief-full way, and Miss Grace as was is doubtless a very clever woman; but the Clyffards of Clyffe—Strike me blind, but that's the blood-hounds! Well! I own it made my heart go pit-a-pat. Did you ever hear such a howling in your life? It really seems as though they had overheard us, and guessed what we were thinking of. Them very blood-hounds, or leastways their fathers before them, have been here these three hundred years. Not even a puppy, they say, has ever been parted with by the family; only a full-grown one was killed by the king's order, or something like it, for eating the gatekeeper's child in Squire Guy's time. He swore it was such a piece of tyranny as he would never put up with; but the dog was hung for all that; and the story goes, that his master buried him in the chapel yonder, and got excommunicated by his priests for so doing. Hang the dogs; I hope their chains are strong! Well, it's one way of rousing the house, at all events.'

The feelings of Mr Clement Carr (who sat on the side next the kennel) did not admit of articulate speech; but he got down with much more agility than could have been expected of a gentleman of his proportions, and running round the back of the gig, applied himself to the iron knocker of the nail-studded front-door with a will. The

courtyard in which they now were was formed by three sides of the castle, which stared upon them from a score of curtained windows, as from sightless eyes; but through both shutter and curtain of one of them gleamed a pale and sickly light, telling of wakefulness and watching even at that slumberous hour.

'That is Squire Ralph's own chamber,' observed Mr Carr, nodding cautiously in the direction in question; 'and if you'll take the advice of so humble an individual as myself, you will not make such a dreadful noise.'

The shocks which Mr Carr was administering to the oaken door did indeed reverberate over the whole building; and the baying of the blood-hounds, mixed with the rattle of chains as they strained to break their bonds, made up a hideous clamour. The latter noise, however, only incited Mr Clement to fresh exertions; and when the door was suddenly opened in front of him, he rushed frantically in, crying: 'The dogs, the dogs! Shut it, lock it; never mind Cator!' without even casting a glance at the person who had admitted him. If his alarm had permitted him to do so, it would probably have taken another direction.

He who stood in the doorway, glancing in speechless indignation from the intruder in the gig to him who had made so unceremonious an entrance, was evidently no serving-man. His face, though haggard and, at the moment, puckered with rage, wore an air of conscious superiority very different from the well-weighted superciliousness of a hall-porter; while his apparel, although dishevelled, as though he had sought repose (as indeed he had) without undressing, was rich and even elegant. But what rendered him most peculiar, and put it out of the question that he could be merely a retainer of the establishment, was that he wore his hair, of which he had an enormous quantity, notwithstanding that he was far advanced in years, in plaits, as race-horses do in these days, and from out of them his gray face peered inquiringly, as a river-god's is sometimes pictured to do from his fell of bulrushes.

'How dare you make this clamour at my door?' he broke forth after a little. 'Who are you, fellow, in the gig, and who is this cur, whom you have brought with you?'

His inquiry was addressed to Mr William Cator, but referred to Mr Clement Carr, who, having climbed up to the huge marble mantel-piece of the hall by means of a chair, had cleverly kicked it over, so as to isolate himself from all attacks of blood-hounds or others; and there he sat, with his legs swinging from the impetus of his exertions, but by no means from the careless confidence which sometimes begets that motion in persons similarly circumstanced.

'My name is Cator, sir,' returned the driver baring his head, and speaking with unwonted humility. 'We have just come over from the Dene.'

'I might have known it,' muttered Ralph Clyffard gravely, for it was the Squire of Clyffe Hall himself who stood before them. 'Have I not been forewarned these three times?'—Then he added aloud: 'Come in, sirrah; a groom will take your horse. When did my poor brother Cyril die?'

'We regret to say, sir,' quoth Mr Clement Carr from the mantel-piece—'I speak for Gideon and myself—that the sudden and deplorable demise of Cyril Clyffard, Esq., took place yesterday afternoon

at twenty-seven minutes and a half exactly to four o'clock.

'Come down, sir, and tell your tidings in a fitting manner!' cried Ralph Clyffard in a terrible voice. 'Could no messenger be found to bring such evil news to Clyffe Hall less like an ape than thou?'

Thus adjured, but by no means displaying the nimbleness of the animal to which he had been likened, Mr Clement descended from his post of vantage.

'The poor gentleman had had paroxysms for nearly a week, sir; his unhappy malady'—

'Stop!' thundered the master of the house; 'not another word if you value your life.—Rupert, my son, what is it?'

The change in Ralph Clyffard's tone as he spoke the last few words was like a summer south wind after a tornado. He addressed them to a youth of about eighteen, who had just entered the hall with a lamp in his hand; he had a dressing-gown loosely cast about him, as though he had just left his couch; and his large blue eyes wandered wildly and inquiringly from his father to the strangers. Accompanying him was another lad about a year his junior, whose appearance afforded a singular contrast to that of the former. They were both well favoured, but whereas the elder was a true young Saxon, auburn-haired and ruddy, with the silver down upon his cheek already turning to golden, the younger might have been born under an Italian sky, so dark and passionate his eyes, so bronzed his face from brow to pointed chin.

'I was waked by the knocking, father,' replied the youth who was called Rupert; 'and Ray said he was sure he heard voices in the hall; and so Ray and I'—

'Will go quietly to bed again,' interrupted a woman's voice with quiet decision. The speaker had entered noiselessly by some door in that part of the great hall which lay in shadow, so that it was impossible to say how long she might have been there. But she now glided forward into the full light of the moonbeams—really a wonderful vision. She was a blonde, such as might well have been Rupert's mother, but that she was much too young—about eight-and-twenty at most—yet she had no likeness to the boy beyond that of complexion, while her expression was singularly different. In Rupert's eyes, there was a look of indecision, of vacillation, almost painful to contemplate; while those of the lady shone clear and steadfast as a star. Her mouth, too, was firm and resolute, although, when she smiled, this did not mar its sweetness; and her voice, though somewhat incisive, was clear and musical as a struck stalactite.

'Both to bed, my good lads,' continued she; 'these persons are not robbers, that your assistance is needed; while whatever news they bring will keep till breakfast-time.'

The lads retired, although reluctantly, with their faces to their inexorable step-mother (for such she was); and not until their footsteps had died away along the vaulted stone passage, did she again break silence.

'Cyril is dead, I conclude,' said she.

Ralph bowed his head, overcome with sorrowful thought; but when she drew close to him, and placed her fragile hand in his, he carried it to his lips, and kissed it tenderly. As he did so, she, with the air of one to whom sovereign favour is

nothing new, inclined graciously towards the messenger.

'How did it happen? Tell me, Clement.'

'For these three days past' [the husband and wife exchanged a meaning glance] 'the poor gentleman has been getting worse and worse; at last he grew very violent. Gideon visited him as usual yesterday afternoon, and Mr Clyffard seized the opportunity of the open door to rush out, and cast himself over the well-staircase. He was killed upon the spot.'

Ralph hid his face, and shuddered.

'That will do,' said he; 'I will hear more at another time. The servants are now aroused, and will see that you want for nothing. I am sorry that I spoke to you so roughly, sir; and with a stately inclination of his head, Ralph Clyffard moved thoughtfully away.

'Why is not Gideon here?' inquired Mrs Clyffard, her beautiful lips shutting close together, as soon as she had spoken, like a purse with a coral clasp.

'He is hurt,' answered Clement shortly. 'They had a struggle for it, he and the other.'

'I thought so,' answered the woman quietly.

'He must have been hurt, indeed, not to have come himself. It is very unfortunate.'

'Well, I am sure I had rather he had come than I,' answered Clement sullenly. 'Such a dreadful road as we had to travel, and not much of a welcome at the end of it, from one's own sister. Why, I believe your husband thought at first that I was no more a gentleman than Cator here.'

'I dare say he did,' returned Mrs Clyffard drily.

'My husband is very peculiar.'

'Peculiar!' echoed Mr Carr. 'I think so indeed. Why, his hair alone is enough to frighten one. He ought to be at the Dene himself; I'm sure he is mad enough.'

'Hush!' returned the lady imperatively. 'You will have an excellent breakfast, Clement, and whatever you please to call for in Clyffe Hall is at your service; see, then, that you make yourself at home—so well, that you need not remember that you have any other home. Speak not one word about the Dene. You will find attendance yonder.'

She shot one look of intelligence towards Cator, which was returned swifter than shuttlecock, and followed her husband to his chamber.

'That's pretty treatment of a brother,' ejaculated Clement, but not until she was well out of earshot.

'It is to be hoped that something's coming of it all at last, for I'm sure we've had enough to put up with.'

'You have had your revenge, too, Mr Clement,' observed the other grimly.

'One has paid for it,' answered Vitellius with an ugly look; 'but the indebtedness is upon the wrong side still. I am longing for the day when we shall cry quits.'

'The matter is in good hands,' returned the keeper of lunatics; 'Miss Grace as was is a clever woman; and in the meantime let us punish the larder.'

CHAPTER IV.—AUNT AND NIECE.

The morning that witnessed the arrival of the messengers from the Dene was many hours older when Mrs Clyffard sat down to breakfast in her own boudoir, attired in deepest black, and wearing an air, if not of respectful sorrow, at least of serious thought. Through the deep bay-window

she could mark from where she sat the golden raiment of the autumn woods of Clyffe, and the windings of its well-stocked stream, from its beginning the thread of pearl, which, like a long necklace, now hid, now seen, upon a maiden's bosom, decked the swelling Fell, down to the far distance, where, a river broad and shining, it yet was lost in the misty plain. Many a mile it ran before her, and all its course was fair; whether with the moorcock and ptarmigan upon the heathery hill, or in the rocky dells of the Park, where the gentle does strayed down to know their beauty, or in the broad rich level beyond, white with farms, and yellow with grain. It was the plain which pleased her best, because it was the richest; for it was greed that kindled in Grace Clyffard's eyes, as she gazed upon that lordly scene. All was hers as far as those eyes could range, to live in and be mistress of; but if the proud demesnes of Clyffe had stretched thrice as far, she would have hungered still for more. All was hers, but for her life only—to enjoy, but not to possess. True, she concerned herself with this life alone, credited it alone, never hoped or thought (although she sometimes dreamed, in spite of herself) of anything beyond it; moreover, she only loved herself, and therefore it could matter nothing into whose hands this wealth should pour, when hers must needs unloose it. Nevertheless, it was that thought which darkened her fair face, and marred her brow, as she gazed forth upon this scene, whose peaceful beauty should have found its own reflection there—To enjoy, but not to possess. 'Nay,' answered those tight shut lips, 'but that cannot be. I must possess before I can enjoy it.' She beat her little foot against the floor, once, twice, and yet again, but not in passion; whatever stirred the depths of her subtle heart, rarely indeed was evidenced upon the surface. There was one answering rap from beneath, and after an interval, a side-door opened behind her, and a young girl entered the room. Mrs Clyffard did not even turn her head, but sat with her rapt gaze still fixed upon the view without.

'Breakfast waits, Mildred,' said she thoughtfully. 'You are late this morning. Have you heard the news from the Dene?'

'Yes, aunt,' replied the girl. 'Mr Cyril Clyffard is dead.'

'Ay, child; the ground behind us then at least is safe. Madmen are said to become sane men sometimes, and stretch their fettered hands again for what was once their own; but the dead lay claim to nothing. Ralph Clyffard is lord of Clyffe at last. I place my feet firm on the second step; but it is still far to climb.—Do you feel strong, child?'

She did not speak these words as a mother would have done. It was her contemptuous habit to address her niece as 'child,' and she used it now mechanically, when no contempt was meant.

'I am strong enough, aunt—for a child,' replied Mildred Leigh coldly. 'What would you have me do?'

Swift as a snake, the lady of Clyffe turned round and placed her face quite close to that of her niece, as she sat at table, so near that not a quiver of the lip, not a trembling of an eyelid could escape her gaze.

'Listen, Mildred; you are no fool, although you would fain that I should take you for one. You are not a baby either. Girls have been wooed and

won, ay, and been widowed too, before they have reached your age. You know for what those lustrous eyes have been given you—and how to use them. You do not plait that raven hair so cunningly to please yourself alone. Boys like that colour always'—she glanced aside in a mirror, glistening in the oaken panel like floating ice on a dark sea, at her own auburn tresses—'but 'tis the blonde that lasts. You will be gray, child, before me. Your time is short, young as you think yourself—beware lest you misuse it. Look you, because Ralph Clyffard wears his hair like you, and having cellars filled with goodly wine, persists in drinking water from the spring, and lives in a half-dream, through poring on his ancestors, and looking for their Curse to fall on him and his, you think perhaps that he himself is mad.'

'I, aunt? Nay, not I?'

'Who, then, child? Who has dared to think my husband mad? Your face does not pay compliments. Was he mad to marry me?' A twitching at the corner of the girl's mouth—the hint of the beginning of a smile—had brought this question swift as the quivering wire upon a tower draws the lightning. 'Well, and what then? Are not all men mad to marry? By Heaven, if I were male, I'd call my house my own, my purse my own; nor would I have children praying for my death, or heirs of any kind. I would not buy the best of wives at such a price. And yet, I suppose, you think there is no man so rich but that he might give both land and gold to make you his, and yet be no spendthrift.'

'I have never thought about it, aunt,' replied Mildred Leigh, colourless as virgin marble before some sculptor who would fain hew it to his purpose. Not a muscle moved, and the long lashes of her eyes drooped down almost as if in slumber.

'You lie—you lie!' returned Mrs Clyffard, slowly. 'Not thought about it, and a girl! Why, girls think of nothing else. Why not confess it, Mildred? You have some right to value yourself highly. Are you not my niece—the nearest to the mistress of Clyffe Hall? Are you not a lady born? Can you not paint? Can you not play? Ah, what a lure is there—the rounded arm thrown round the golden harp, the fingers twinkling on the jet-black keys! Can you not sing as any siren can? What would a man have more? But, mark! if you had known none of these fine things, but scarcely could read a line out of a book; or if you could, would have had none to listen to you, since all were rude and cultureless about you; your father a boor, dead in a drunken brawl; your mother an evil memory; your brothers hated by all who knew them, and most hated by those who knew them best—driving a base trade basely: if this had been your fortune—as it was *mine*, child—you might have said indeed: "Should any man of rank and wealth—let alone a Clyffard, the proudest and the richest in all the country-side—propose to marry me, and take me from this sordid roof, and make me mistress of his ancestral home, he surely must be mad." So, niece, when I saw you smile, or thinking of a smile just now, when I said: "Was he mad to marry me?" I was neither angered nor surprised.'

'Nay, aunt,' answered the girl in a deprecating tone, 'I meant nothing like that indeed. But having heard you say yourself that Uncle Ralph was likely some day to—'

'Never, Mildred!' interrupted Mrs Clyffard—'never, never! You are mistaken. You never

heard me say so; and if you dreamed you heard me, see you forget that dream. Ralph Clyffard is sane enough, but he will not live long.—Mildred pushed aside her plate, its contents almost untouched, and sank back in her chair with her hand pressed to her brow.—‘Nay, I wish I could think otherwise, child,’ continued her aunt coldly. ‘There is no life—not yours or Gideon’s—which I can afford so ill to lose just now as his. But he has not many years, perhaps months, to pass at his beloved Clyffe. When I am widowed here—well-dowered though I be, and free to live my life out at the Hall—things will be altered; I shall be no longer mistress. Rupert will be bringing home some smooth-faced, smooth-tongued wife, who swears she loves the books that are his idols. Or Raymond will have free quarters at the Hall for some still more hateful mate—a gipsy from the forest, like as not, some large-limbed Fury, whom I shall have to poison.’ Her hands closed tightly as she spoke, so that the pink nails of her fingers stabbed her delicate flesh, and she threw open the casement, as if for air. But for that, she must need have seen Mildred’s tell-tale bosom palpitate, and the colour rush impetuous over cheek and brow. But the lady of Clyffe had passions of her own to hide, and kept her face averted, though she spoke on. ‘Where I have ruled, I will rule still to the end; and it is you who must help me to do so, as the mouse helped the lion in the fable.’ She paused, as if waiting for a reply, but no answer coming save in the quick throbbings of the girl’s heart, inaudible to her aunt, although to her own terrified ears they seemed to fill the room with sound, Mrs Clyffard added. ‘Do you know *how* you must help me, Mildred?’

‘No, aunt.’

‘By being a dutiful and faithful daughter-in-law. You must marry Rupert Clyffard, and that soon.’

‘But I do not love him, aunt.’

‘So much the better, niece. Your judgment, when you come to rule him, will be the less likely to be blinded.’

‘But he does not love *me*,’ faltered the girl.

‘Even if such were the case,’ answered Mrs Clyffard coldly, ‘there are means to make him, without using love-potions. But he does love you, and you know it, Mildred; for I know it, and you must need have learned it before me. When he took your hand in the Oak Gallery but yesterday, and strove to kiss it—pshaw, never blush for that; it was only I who witnessed it—you were right not to suffer him. You did very well; but do not say that Rupert is indifferent to you. That was not the first love-passage between you two, as I presume. Ay, so I thought. Why, what a trembling dove is this, that the very mention of her future mate should flutter her thus!’

Mildred Leigh did tremble, yet not with the timidity of love, but rather as the Dove cowers and quails over whom the Hawk is poisoning, and threatening to stoop.

“By my faith,” as the Clyffards say, although I doubt whether one of them ever had enough to swear by, but you play the maiden prettily. Only, look you, Mildred, added her aunt, changing her tone of railleury for one of sharpest earnest, ‘do not overact it; or rather, keep your more frigid moods for me, but to your lover thaw a little. You may let him kiss your hand next time—not snatch your fingers away, as though his lips were

springes. I thought to have had a very different rôle to support, girl, when I brought you to Clyffe Hall last year; I deemed you would want a Duenna or Mistress Prudence to say: “Hang back, hang back.” Why, there is not a handsomer lad than Rupert Clyffard betwixt this and Carel, and fitted with all the graces that are dear to fools of your age; while as for those matters to which a woman, if a wise one, sets her mind, there is scarcely a better match in all the north. “What luck was mine,” say all folks here, yet yours is twice as good. Ralph Clyffard was neither young nor fair to look upon; and he had sons, another woman’s sons, and Cyril was alive; while you—you moping, milk-faced fool, beware how you anger me with tears! I have not got thus far upon my way to be balked by a girl’s mad fancy. Mad? There never was a Clyffard half so mad as you would be if you said “No” to Rupert; for if you lose him, Mildred—who are poor as any beggar, dependent on my bounty for your very garments—you lose all you see from yonder casement—Wealth; and Station, that makes the proudest smile upon you; and Power, that bends the stiff neck of the poor; and you gain—Mildred, be sure of this—a lifelong enemy in one who never yet has failed to work her will!’

‘I know it well,’ answered Mildred hopelessly. ‘I will endeavour not to shrink; I will strive to love your step-son Rupert.’

‘I care not for that, girl; strive you to marry him. Now, get you gone, for I have webs to weave that demand my most deliberate thought. This Carr, here, he is your uncle, child, but not your equal. Give him your finger-tips, but not to kiss. Be cold and stately to him, and especially in the presence of Ralph Clyffard. Do not fear lest this should anger him; it will be easy enough to be affable when you have become great: for a smooth word from one who is in honour heals all.’

THE CUCKOO AND THE NIGHTINGALE.

OUR oldest poet, and almost our best, unites in one sweet song the cuckoo and the nightingale—the former to be chidden, and spoken off despitely; the latter to be made the theme of fervent praise, as the singer and harbinger of love. Taken altogether, the cuckoo, in fact, is far from being an attractive bird. Somehow, it has in all countries been regarded as a symbol of matrimonial infidelity, probably because it introduces itself into, and defiles the nests of other birds. Shakspeare, who loved to make eternal the fancies and prejudices of mankind, exclaims:

Cuckoo! cuckoo! O word of fear!
Unpleasing to a married ear!

Loved or hated, however, it is a creature about which we know less than any other winged animal. It comes and goes in mystery, no one being able to decide what is its original country, how far it extends its travels, to what peculiarity in its structure or constitution it owes its restless propensity, or why, almost as soon as born, it becomes a sort of feathered Cain, murdering its foster-brethren, and, according to some, devouring the very dam that fed it. Wide, indeed, are its wanderings. It is heard on the banks of the Niger and the Senegal in the heart of Africa; it is familiar to the dwellers on the Obi and the Irish; it flies screaming forth its harsh dissyllables over the Baltic surge;

it repeats them untiringly in the perfumed air of Andalusia and Granada, among the ruins of the Alhambra and the Generalife; it startles the woodman in the forests of France; it amuses the school-boy in the green vales of Kent, of Gloucestershire, and of Devonshire.

Our associations with the cuckoo are, in some cases, pleasant; it comes to us with the first of those peregrinating birds that usher in the summer; its cry is redolent of sunshine, of the scent of primroses, of lindens, of oaks and elms, of solitary pathways, of the lilled banks of streams. Occasionally, we know not why, it flies early in the morning over the skirts of great cities, as if to invite their inmates to shake off drowsiness, and look forth upon the loveliness of the young day. Not many weeks ago, we heard it in London, just as the clouds were parting in the east to make way for the first beams of dawn. Many summers back, we heard the self-same notes echoing among the pinnacles of the Alps, before the morning-star had faded from behind the Jungfrau. The cuckoo is a sort of familiar chronicler, that gathers up the events of our lives, and brings them to our memory by his well-known voice. As he shouts over our heads, we call to mind the many summers the sweet scents of which we have inhaled, the rambles we have taken in the woods, our idolatry of nature, our innocent pleasures.

The cuckoo and the nightingale constitute the opposite poles of the ornithological world; one the representative of eternal monotony, the other of infinite variety. Among men, there are cuckoos and nightingales—individuals whose ideas are few, who think invariably after the same pattern, who repeat day after day the formulas of the nursery and the school-room, who, from their swaddling-bands to their shrouds, never break away from the social catechism dinned into them at the outset; while there are others who seem, at least in their range of thought, to know no limit but that of creation, to generate fresh swarms of ideas every moment, now to hover among the nebulae on the extreme verge of the universe, and now to nestle in the chalice of the violet, where even Ariel could scarcely find room for the tip of his pinion. Naturalists may be fanciful, like poets; and if this liberty be ever allowable, it is surely so when they speak of the nightingale. The organisation of this winged miracle, whose whole weight does not exceed an ounce, may in truth be looked upon as one of the most remarkable in the whole scale of animal life. The roar of the gorilla can, it is said, be heard a full mile. But the gorilla is a colossus, equalling in stature one of the sons of Anak; while Philomela, not exceeding in bulk the fore-joint of the monster's thumb, is able at night, when all the woods are still, to cause the liquid melody of her notes to be heard at an equal distance. Consider the organ, measure the length of country, and the ecstasy of the listening ear, and you will perhaps acknowledge that there are few phenomena familiar to our experience more astonishing than this. We have stood at midnight on a mountain in the south of France, and at a distance quite as great, we think, as that mentioned above, have heard the notes of the songstress of darkness borne up to us on the breeze from the depths of an unwooded valley. Faintly and gently they came through the hushed air, but there could be no mistake about their identity; no other mortal mixture of earth's mould than her throat

could have given forth such sounds, crisp, clear, long-drawn, melancholy, as if she were still lamenting the sad hap that overtook her amid the solitudes of Hellas. The French, down even to the peasants, love the nightingale; and wild country girls, who in their whole lives never read a page of poetry, will sit out half the night on a hillside to listen to their favourite bird. A priest once invited us to pass a week with him in his village *presbytere*, and in enumerating the inducements, mentioned first that there were nightingales in the neighbourhood. His home was in the valley of Mortagne, in the Bocages of Normandy, where these birds are in fact as plentiful as sparrows.

In Italy, especially in Tuscany and the Venetian states, the nightingale trills her notes with more than ordinary beauty. The great Roman naturalist who perished amid the lava-floods of Vesuvius, often, we may be sure, enjoyed her song from his nephew's garden in this part of the peninsula. No description of the wonders she achieves can approach the one he has left us for truth or eloquence, and it was written in all likelihood by the light of some antique lamp between the prolonged gushes of her music. Unhappily, it is true, as he says, that the nightingale's song can only be heard in perfection during fifteen out of the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year. The female bird is then sitting in her nest, imparting vital heat to the musicians of future years; and her lover, fully impressed with the importance of her duty, intoxicates her with his voice, to dispel the tedium of confinement. In spite of natural history, however, poetry transfers to the mute female the singing powers of her lord:

Nightly she sings from yon pomegranate-tree.

Pliny, too, after stating the fact, that it is the male that sings, immediately avails himself of the aid supplied by metonymy, and changes the sex of the musician. Let us take his description, as honest Philemon Holland supplies it in the language of Elizabeth's time: 'Is it not a wonder,' he says, 'that so loud and clear a voice should come from so little a body? Is it not as strange that she should hold her breath so long, and continue with it as she doth? Moreover, she alone in her song keepeth time and measure truly; she riseth and falleth in her note just with the rules of music and perfect harmonie: for one while in one entire breath she draweth out her tune at length treatable; another while she quavereth, and goeth away as fast in her running points; sometimes she maketh stops and short cuts in her notes, another time she gathereth in her breath and singeth descant between the plain song; she fetcheth her breath again, and then you shall have her in her catches and divisions; anon, all on a sudden, before a man would think it, she drowneth her voice, that one can scarce hear her; now and then she seemeth to record to herself; and then she breaketh out to sing voluntarie. In some she varieth and altereth her voice to all keys; one while full of her larges, longs, briefs, semibreves, and minims; another while in her crotchets, quavers, semiquavers, and double semiquavers, for at one time you shall hear her voice full and loud, another time as low; and anon shrill and on high: thick and short when she list; drawn out at leisure again when she is disposed; and then (if she be so pleased) she riseth and mounteth up aloft, as it were with a wind-organ. Thus she altereth from

one to another, and singeth all parts, the treble, the meane, and the base. To conclude; there is not a pipe or instrument again in the world (devised with all the art and cunning of man so exquisitely as possibly might be) that can afford more music than this pretty bird doth out of that little throat of hers.

We have persons here in England who earn their livelihood by catching nightingales. It is the same in most other countries. Near Cairo, there is, or used to be, a pretty grove of mingled mimosas, palms, and sycamores, where the netters of nightingales station themselves at night, in the proper season, to take the bird when in full song. According to their report, which there is no reason to discredit, the male bird becomes so intoxicated by the scented air, by love, and by his own music, that the cap-net, fixed at the summit of a long reed, may be raised and closed about him before he is sensible of his danger. From the free woods, he is then transferred to a cage, where, in nine cases out of ten, he dies of nostalgia. Nor is this all. The female bird, accustomed not only to be cheered by his song, but likewise fed by his industry, pines and perishes with all her brood. The wren, the swallow, the titlark intermit the business of incubation, and leave their nests for a minute or a minute and a half to help themselves while they are sitting, or to assist the male in feeding the young after the eggs are hatched; but the female nightingale used, like an eastern sultana, to be provided for entirely by her lord, feels her utter helplessness when she is deserted, and leaning her little head and neck over the edge of the nest, with her eyes fixed in the direction in which he used to come, dies in that attitude of expectancy. The reason is that the instinct of pairing, which is strong in many other birds, reaches its culminating point in the nightingale—the same males and females keeping together for years without ever seeking other mates.

The cuckoo, as we have said, offers the most striking contrast in the development of its instincts. It does not pair at all, and as there are more males than females, we may often see two or three of the former sex following one of the latter, and fighting for her favours. As the parents care not for one another, neither do they care for their young. It was long supposed that the cuckoo laid only one egg in the season; but this has been found to be an error, for though they leave no more than one egg in one nest—we mean generally—they have been observed to make deposits in various nests, and then fly away to a distant part of the country, or even to other lands. In the female cuckoo, therefore, the maternal instinct is entirely wanting, which, though it acts in obedience to an imperious law of nature, makes it a hateful bird. As soon as it quits the shell, it begins to exhibit its odious qualities. When the cuckoo's egg is placed in the nest of the hedge-sparrow, for example, the deluded mother perceives no difference between the alien production and her own. She sits, therefore, on what she finds, and having no idea of numbers, of course never thinks of counting the eggs. When hatching-time arrives, however, she is made the witness of an extraordinary scene. The villainous young cuckoo, which often escapes from the shell a whole day before the others, immediately begins to clear the nest by pitching out the unhatched eggs; or if the young ones have made their appearance, forth they are thrown in like manner. Nature has fabricated the little monster with a view to this

ungrateful proceeding, for in its back there is a hollow depression, in which egg or chick may be placed while he is rising to shunt it over the battlements. The process is extremely curious: the young assassin, putting shoulder and elbow to the work, keeps continually thrusting against his victim till he gets it on his back; he then rises, and placing his back aslant, tumbles it out into empty space. This done, and finding that he has all the dwelling to himself, he subsides quietly into his place, and waits with ever-open bill for the dole which the foolish sparrow wears itself almost to death in providing for the faithless wretch. When the nest happens to be situated in a high hedge, you may often see the young sparrows spiked alive on the thorns, or the eggs still palpitating with living birds lying unbroken on the soft grass below. This inspires naturalists with no pity; they observe that neither the eggs nor the young birds are thrown away, since various reptiles that feed on such substances make a comfortable meal of what is thus placed within their reach.

As the cuckoo does nothing in life but eat, scream, and lay eggs for other birds to hatch, it needs no education, and receives none. On the other hand, the nightingale, having to perform the highest functions allotted to the class *aves*, requires much training and discipline, study and preparation. The young nightingale does not sing by mere instinct. If taken from the nest soon after it is hatched, and brought up among inferior creatures, it is incapable of performing its lofty mission, and deals in vulgar twittering like them; just as a baby, if removed from the society of speech-gifted mortals, and intrusted to the care of dumb persons, will lack that divine quality of expressing ideas which distinguishes man from the brute. The nightingale needs and receives a classical education. Even the Jesuits bestow infinitely less care on the voices of their novices than the nightingale bestows on his children. When the grass is dewy—when the leaves are green and fresh—when the soft breath of the morning steals over the woods like incense, the old bird takes forth the young ones, before it is quite light, and placing them on some bough, with strict injunctions to listen, goes a little way off, and begins his song. In this he commences with the easier notes, and is careful to keep the whole in a comparatively narrow compass. He then pauses to watch the result of his first instructions. After a brief delay, during which they are turning over the notes in their minds, the young ones take up the lay one by one, and go through it, as our neighbours say, *tant bien que mal*. The teacher watches their efforts with attention; applauds them when right; chides them when they have done amiss; and goes on day by day reiterating his lessons till he considers his pupils quite equal to the high duties they have to perform. Mankind, of course, imagine that those duties consist in soothing their ears, and driving away melancholy. But *apropos* of the performances of another bird, our philosophic poet inquires:

Is it for thee the lark ascends and sings?

And replies:

Joy tunes his voice, joy animates his wings.

So with the nightingale—

Loves of his own and raptures swell the note.

Some one speaking of our own species, says:

We think, we toil, we war, we rove,
And all we ask is—woman's love.

It is to win the love of Philomela that the male nightingale studies, watches, and pours forth his soul in song. He had much rather that men did not listen; he is a shy, solitary, and timid bird, and takes his love away into the forests, where, undisturbed by the sounds of vulgar life, he ravishes her ears with music. It is a question much discussed by poets and naturalists, whether the nightingale's song be joyous or melancholy. It probably derives its character from the frame of mind in which the listener happens to be—to the joyous it is mirthful, to the sorrowful it is sad—but in its real nature it is what Milton suggests—

She all night long her amorous descant sung.

Still it must be owned that they who discover melancholy in her long, low, meltingly-sweet notes, seem to approach nearer the truth than they who describe her as a merry bird. It is superstition, perhaps, that attributes to her the strange philosophy which makes anguish the well-spring of pleasure. When desirous, it is said, of reaching the sublimest heights of song, she leans her breast against a thorn, in order that the sense of pain may tone down her impetuous rapture into sympathy with human sorrow.

Another strange notion is, that the nightingale fixes her eyes—

Her bright, bright eyes; her eyes both bright and full—

on some particular star, from which she never withdraws them till her song is concluded, unless she be alarmed by the approach of some foot-step, or other sound indicative of danger. We remember once, in Kent, going forth to spend a night in the fields to enjoy the strange delight imparted by the nightingale's notes. We placed ourselves on a little eminence overlooking a valley, covered at intervals by scattered woods. It was the dead watch and middle of the night; silence the most absolute brooded over the earth. We stood still in high expectation. Presently, one lordly nightingale flung forth at no great distance from the summit of a lofty tree his music on the night. The lay was not protracted, but a rich, short, defiant burst of melody; he then, like the Roman orator, paused for a reply. The reply came, not close at hand, but, as it seemed, from some copse or thicket far down in the valley. If one might presume to judge on the spur of the moment, the second songster did really outdo the first. The notes came forth bubbling, gushing, quivering, palpitating, as it were, with soul, for nothing material ever resembled it. He went over a broad area of song, with a sort of wilderness of melody; his notes followed each other so rapidly, high, low, linked, broken—now sweeping away like a torrent, now sinking till it sounded like the scarcely audible murmur of a distant bee. He then stopped abruptly, confident that he had given his rival something to reflect upon. We now waited to hear that rival's answer, but he appeared to consider himself defeated, and remained silent. Another champion now stepped forward, and took up the challenge. He must surely have been the prince of his race. From a tree on the slope of a height, not far to the right of our position, he gave us a new specimen of the poetry of his race. The former two, evidently younger and more inexperienced, had been in a hurry. He took up his parable at leisure, beginning with a few light

flourishes by way of preface, after which he plunged into his epic, seeming to carry on the subject from the epoch of Deucalion and Pyrrha, down to that moment, displaying all the resources of art, and presenting us with every form into which music could be moulded. What he might have achieved at last, or to what pitch he might have raised our ecstasy, must remain a mystery, for before he had concluded his song, a thundering railway train, belching forth fire and smoke as it advanced, seemed to be on the very point of annihilating the songsters; so they all took to flight, or at least remained obstinately silent. We waited hour after hour, now pacing in one direction, now in another; stopping short, pausing in our talk, listening till the streaky dawn, climbing slowly up the eastern hills, revealed to us the inutilty of further hope.

The first time we heard the nightingale was from the deck of a vessel in the Avon, near Lee Woods. It was a starlight night; we were leaning on the bulwarks, speculating on the reception we were to meet with in England—in which we had that day arrived for the first time. As we were chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy, from an inditure in the Woods, called, as we have since learned, Nightingale Valley, there burst forth at once a flood of sound, the strangest, the sweetest, the most intoxicating we had ever heard—it must be, it was the voice of the nightingale—

To the land of my fathers that welcomed me back.

Years not a few have rolled by since then, but we remember as distinctly as if it were yesternight the pleasure of that exquisite surprise. We heard the nightingale in England before the cuckoo—a circumstance which, according to Chaucer, should portend good-luck; and so it did—good-luck and happy days.

Perhaps much of the pleasure tasted in such cases is derived from the time of year—for both the cuckoo and the nightingale belong to the spring—when the air is full of balm, when the foliage is thick, when the grass is green and young—and when, especially in the morning, delicate odours ascend from the earth, which produce a wonderful effect upon the animal spirits. Through these scents, the cry of one bird and the song of the other invariably come to us; the one flitting at early dawn over the summits of woods, the other in loneliest covert hid, making night lovely, and smoothing the raven down of darkness till it smiles.

A SONG.

THE sky it is so blue,
And the little leaves so new,
And the hedges are so beautiful in fresh-blown May;
And my bosom is so light,
I must laugh for mere delight:
She is coming, coming, coming, coming down this way.

I had rather see her eyes
Than the sweetest azure skies;
She is lovelier and purer than the snowy bloom of May;
Do not talk of nature bright,
For I see my own delight:
She is coming, coming, coming, coming down this way.

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